

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 230819
ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY IO/UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY IO/UNA:JFTEFFT

S/S-O:RSNIDER

-----098736 130226Z /62

O 122044Z SEP 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0506

S E C R E T STATE 230819

EXDIS, FOR AMB. YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT JIDDA 6544 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
DAMASCUS, BEIRUT, LONDON, PARIS AND TEL AVIV SEP 12.

QUOTE: S E C R E T JIDDA 6544

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI POSITION ON LEBANON

REF: (A) JIDDA 6535 (B) STATE 221464 (C) JIDDA 6402
(D) JIDDA 6408 (E) STATE 224264 (F) DAMASCUS 5205
(G) BEIRUT 5115

1. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS HANDED
POL COUN NOTE VERBALE ON SEPTEMBER 10 GIVING SAG RESPONSE
TO OUR MESSAGE OF AUGUST 31 (REFTEL B) . TEXT OF NOTE VERBALE
SENT REFTEL (A).

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2. POL COUN SAID THAT HE FELT MANSOURI HAD MISUNDER-
STOOD OUR MESSAGE OF AUGUST 31 TO PRINCE SAUD. WE HAD
NOT MEANT TO IMPLY THAT PHALANGE MILITIA REPRESENTED ALL
THE CHRISTIAN IN LEBANON. OUR POINT WAS THAT EXCESSES
OF SYRIANS IN ADF WERE BEGINNING TO ALIENATE CHRISTIANS
TO SUCH EXTENT THAT THEY WERE BEING DRIVEN INTO ARMS OF
PHALANGISTS. WE FELT THIS WAS UNFORTUNATE. IF SYRIAN

PURPOSES WAS TO RESTORE ORDER, THEIR ACTIONS WERE ACTUALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, SINCE THEIR ACTIVITIES WERE BOUND TO CREATE FURTHER VIOLENCE AND FURTHER CHALLENGES TO AUTHORITY OF ADF. SECONDLY, OUR MESSAGE DID NOT SAY THAT WE SUSPECTED SYRIA OF HAVING TERRITORIAL AMBITION .

3. MANSOURI BROKE IN AT THIS POINT TO SAY THAT EVEN SO SYRIANS WERE WIDELY SUSPECTED OF HAVING AMBITIONS OF PERMANENT OCCUPATION IN LEBANON. EVEN SYRIA FEARED THIS AT ONE TIME. SAUDI VIEW NOW IS THAT SYRIA WISHES TO RETAIN INFLUENCE BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IN LEBANON AFTER WITHDRAWAL. SYRIANS ESPECIALLY WANT TO HARMONIZE LEBANESE ECONOMIC POLICIES WITH SYRIAN ECONOMIC POLICIES. SAG DOES NOT LOOK WITH GREAT FAVOR ON SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH HEGEMONY IN LEBANON. YET, THERE IS LITTLE THAT SAG CAN DO ABOUT IT AT PRESENT. FIRST PRIORITY NOW IS TO REESTABLISH LEBANESE AUTHORITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND TO GET SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL. PERHAPS SYRIAN HEGEMONY CAN BE CHALLENGED LATER. TO REESTABLISH LEBANESE AUTHORITY MEANT BRINGING THE MILITIAS UNDER CONTROL SOMEHOW.

4. POL COUN SAID THAT U.S. GOALS IN LEBANON ACCORDED WELL WITH SAUDI GOALS. OUR DIFFERENCES WERE OVER METHOD OF ACCOMPLISHING THOSE GOALS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AN ATTEMPT TO BRING MILITIAS UNDER CONTROL BY MILITARY MEANS

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IS THE BEST WAY TO BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT. SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION COULD LEAD TO BITTERNESS THAT WOULD PLAGUE THE COUNTRY AND HAVE AN UNSETTLING EFFECT FOR YEARS TO COME. PERHAPS THE BEST WAY TO BRING THE MILITIAS UNDER CONTROL IS THROUGH POLITICAL OR DIPLOMATIC MEANS TO BRING IN THE MEANTIME, OUR PRIMARY AIM IS TO PREVENT AN UNFORTUNATE CONFRONTATION THAT WILL RUIN THE CHANCES FOR USING POLITICAL OR DIPLOMATIC MEANS TO BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE BEEN URGING THE SYRIANS, AS WELL AS THE CHRISTIANS, TO RESTRAIN THEMSELVES.

5. POL COUN ALSO SAID THAT WE WERE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT ISRAEL'S REACTION TO ANY SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO CRUSH MILITIAS MILITARILY. WE HAVE CONVEYED TO SYRIANS AND TO LEBANESE OUR PERCEPTION OF THE ISRAELI MOOD AND THE CONCERNS THIS CAUSED US. A SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO CRUSH THE MILITIA MILITARILY COULD BRING ABOUT ISRAELI INTERVENTION. IN THIS RESPECT, IT IS TRUE THAT WE HAVE BEEN CARRYING MESSAGES. BY THE SAME TOKEN, WE HAVE CARRIED MESSAGES IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, EXPRESSING TO ISRAELIS THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE SYRIANS AND LEBANESE HAVE VIEWED ISRAELI ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE CHRISTIANS

RIGHTISTS. OUR PEOPLE IN ISRAEL HAVE WORKED EXTREMELY
HARD TO DISSUADE THE ISRAELIS FROM INTERFERING IN LEBANON.

6. MANSOURI SAID OUR GOALS WERE SIMILAR. SAG WANTS
TO FIND WAY TO BRING ABOUT SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL. IN
RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HE SAID QUESTION OF RENEWAL OF
ADF WOULD NOT BE DECIDED AT ARAB LEAGUE NOUNCIL MEETING
IN CAIRO. THIS MATTER HAS BEEN DEFERRED UNTIL ARAB
FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN NEW YORK. IF THE FIGHTING
DIES DOWN OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS, SAG MIGHT
FAVOR TERMINATION OF ADF MANDATE. SYRIA WILL THEN BE
IN LEBANON WITHOUT ARAB LEAGUE COVER, AND THE ARAB
STATES WILL THEN BE IN A POSITION TO PUSH FOR WITHDRAWAL.
WEST UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, HEGEMONY, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, COMBAT OPERATIONS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE230819
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BJSARP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780371-0741
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780975/aaaackjp.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d2eedf51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 JIDDA 6535, 78 STATE 221464, 78 JIDDA 6402, 78 JIDDA 6408, 78 STATE 224264, 78 DAMASCUS 5205
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1463955
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAUDI POSITION ON LEBANON
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, SA, US, SY, LE, ADF
To: USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d2eedf51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014